THE MIND
OF THE
NAUGHTY CHILD

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

ARE you puzzled about your child?

All parents with any intelligence are puzzled at times. Their child acts in ways they cannot understand, is naughty without reason, does those things which he ought not to do and leaves undone those things which he ought to do. Parents peer anxiously back into their own childhood for some explanatory remembrance of the child mind. But because they have forgotten, and because of the gulf fixed between the generations, very rarely are they able to comprehend the motives that direct the conduct of children.

The child and the adult are always strangers.

There is no greater mistake than this; that it is easy for the parents to understand their children. Some parents adopt the easy solution of leaving a child to itself, and, indeed, this is not by any means the most dangerous of treatments, if only the parent has a natural tenderness for the child. The careless but affectionate parent is not the worst kind of parent. And there is, strange as this may seem to those who have not thought about it, more danger in over-anxious interference than there is in loving neglect.

Most parents, however, are faced with some definite trouble and few mothers, at any rate, are able to leave their children alone. They are too anxious about the development of the character of the child. Their children are sulky, fall into unexpected tempers, are disobedient; they retire from other children's company and mope; they are backward at school and do not develop in the right way. At other times the children are jealous, angry when brothers and sisters are praised, or when father occupies the attention of mother so that they feel little and left out; or again a child becomes destructive or is constantly peering into drawers and cupboards, while another child is contradictory and cocksure in the extreme.

Worse than these more common faults (and here the ordinary parent is "greatly alarmed, and yet such cases are not unusual) one of the children, with no apparent cause, begins to take what is not his property, he will rifle cupboards of cake and jam, take sweets and playthings from his companions and hide them, and

will even steal money if he can find it and do so without being* found out. Other children persist in telling lies or inventing romantic adventures in which they always play the hero's part. No scolding or punishment seems to break this bad habit; the child may show sorrow and even shame just when he is convicted of an untruth, but very soon he does the same thing again.

Help can be given to the parents of such children. The help will be plain and practical in character. At the same time, it must be understood that the immediate action complained of in the child–the fault that is troubling the parent, making the child naughty–is really a sign, and must always be so regarded, of a hidden trouble. The child who steals, steals neither solely because he wants what he takes nor because he was born dishonest. The child who lies does not do so because he gives way to the human tendency to lie. It is useless merely to scold or punish children for being sulky, jealous, destructive, prying or cocksure. The symptoms of a deeper evil cannot, with any profit, be dealt with apart from their causes.

Always you must ask yourself why your child does this or that? What is the concealed motive that impels his conduct? Unless you can answer this question (and to find the answer is never easy and, in every case, calls for knowledge and great patience) you are as unable to help your child as a doctor would be who started to treat a patient without any examination as to the nature of his disease.

There can be no quack remedies in dealing with children.

The good that this book will do for any parent troubled with these kinds of slight childish malformation of character, is precisely this: it will show the deep causes on which such faults are based. Unless the cause is discovered the evil not only cannot be cured but it will grow; and this is true, even when the specific fault which is the visible manifestation, is checked; the evil, apparently got rid of, is active still, and later will break out in another and often worse form. The sulkiness, jealousy, thieving, lying, are like bubbles that rise from the depths. From time to time a bubble rises and bursts. What is the wound in the inner being that sets free from time to time the poisonous gas that goes up in a bubble? That is the question that has to be answered. Once the cause is known it can be dealt with, it can to some degree be made known to the child himself, and he can himself help in his own cure.

I shall deal separately with various kinds of undesirable childish behaviour. First, however, a few words must be said as to the special difficulties which any child has to face.

Few parents, I think, understand sufficiently how very hard are the efforts the child has to make to grow up. It is not easy for the child to be good; to do what you want and leave off doing what he wants to do himself. The child lives in an adult world in which everything is arranged by grown-ups of whose ways and desires he has very little understanding and often a very great dislike. He is exactly in the same position as a traveller in a strange land, where he does not know the customs of the people or speak their language.

We like to think of childhood as a delightful period of happy innocence.

But the very reverse is the truth. The child has brought with it much from more primitive times; just in the same way as its body shows traces of earlier development in life, so its emotions, its wishes and its conduct revert back in many particulars to lower stages of growth. Always the child has to fight its way up and, indeed, it has no easy task to find and keep the right path in its way of discovery from the savagery of the babe to the level of a civilised social man or woman. If we do not help it in every possible way, the task becomes doubly hard and often the path is lost or, in other words, the savage triumphs.

Every effort must be made to educate from the very hour of birth those primitive instincts and behaviour which, though permissible and right in the little child, are wholly wrong if allowed to remain active so that they persist in the later adult years. Delay is fatal. Time lost now can never be regained; mistakes cannot be put right. A wrong direction may most easily be given even by a careless act.

I cannot emphasise this too strongly and too soon. ***The fate of every child is decided in the nursery.***

And this brings me to the second fact I wish to bring forward; the almost terrible dependence of the child on its parents, and especially on the mother, who at first occupies all the child's life. The importance of the mother's influence cannot possibly be exaggerated. I shall speak of this again, but what I wish above all to emphasise now is the persistence of this influence–the deeply stamped mother-picture started in this first chapter of life.

As the child gradually realises its world, it learns its own limitations, sees itself dependent on others. Everything it wants it must receive. Very soon it learns to adapt itself to gaining what it wants.

And here I reach a further fact that is of the very greatest importance. The child at a very early age has to become an actor. So many parents, and especially good parents, expect too much from their children. Judge them too frequently by a grown up standard quite wrong for their stage of growth. Expect them to be too clean, too quiet, too obedient. This causes very often a continuous and most harmful nervous strain from the child pretending to be what you want and think he ought to be. He tries, at a cost you do not easily understand, to like what you think he ought to like.

It has filled me often with wonder and admiration to see the really brilliant way in which even the youngest children play up to the good-child part forced upon them by grown-ups. Much naughtiness and many violent unexplained tempers are really a breakdown in this part. The right cue is forgotten at the right moment, or the correct entrance is missed; and I feel it very necessary to urge upon every parent to remember the very simple truth that their child is a child, and never ought to be expected, or indeed, allowed to have the controlled emotions and to act in the regulated way right for the adult. It is here, as I suggested before, that the careless loving parent has advantages from the child's point of view. The over-conscientious, over-good mother so often demands too much, and by so doing frequently does harm to the child, which afterwards never can be undone.

There is another danger that only the wisest mothers quite escape in the very natural desire to keep their children too closely bound by their love, for the child has two contradictory impulses. It would remain in comfort and safety in the mother's arms. All children go back in trouble to the mother, but the healthy child would also like to be bold, to do things by itself, to be brave, clever and admired. Never can it achieve this good for itself if it is too much looked after, too much loved in an unwise way.

Many mothers hinder their children by seeking to possess them too much and for too long.

It is a good thing that the English parent encourages the child to be independent, to climb trees, to go out by himself, to fall into the brook. The poor child here has an advantage over the rich child. The neatly gloved child that always walks quietly down the pavements with its nurse, bored and dull, will not become resourceful in the emergencies of adult life.

Children who do exactly what they are told and are told exactly what to do throughout the day are without the needful opportunity for selfexpression, and after a time they come, as a rule, to enjoy the pleasure of resting on their parents. Without any responsibilities they grow up incapable of exercising responsibility. The too exacting mother perpetuates the childhood of her son.

These children will not make themselves a nuisance by disobedience and falling into mischief, indeed, they may be the very pattern of "mother's good child"; yet I must insist upon the danger of this dependence; there is no condition of childhood so harmful, so likely to

bring irremediable injury to the character. Such children retire into themselves, find over-great pleasure in solitary satisfactions, they go back to the primitive stage of self-communing joys derived from what they receive, as when they sucked at their mother's breast. This is a very dangerous state of affairs. Such children must be made to join in play and work with other children; they should not be allowed to be much with their mother or with any adult; they need to be encouraged to decide things and live in the real world and not in a dream world.

There is one thing more. It must be known that the wise directing of the fundamental emotional impulses, which will in later life develop into the adult sexual impulses, is the most important duty of the parent and is the root basis of character. No parent can neglect these primitive instincts. How they are directed and how they gain their earliest expression in relation to the mother, the father, the brothers and the sisters and all who come within the child's circle of the home, will provide the main framework of the structure of the child's character, a structure never to be altered, however much later circumstances may change the decorations and rebuild the features of lesser importance. In particular the peculiarities and mal-adaptation of the adult sex-life are due to the first germs of the sex attitude, expressed in the earliest years by the relationships in the home. The entire after love-life is dependent on these first formative years.

This doctrine is not easy or popular, and often is misunderstood, but the more it is studied and comprehended in its real meaning, the more certain its truth will appear.

These preliminaries having been explained we will examine one by one the most common types of troublesome and difficult children.

CHAPTER II

THE BUMPTIOUS, BOASTFUL AND VIOLENT TEMPERED CHILD

EVERY child suffers sometimes from a feeling of inferiority. He is so much smaller and weaker than the grown-ups who control his play and his work that he feels uncomfortably helpless against their authority, which to him seems often to be exercised in an arbitrary and unkind way.

It is then that he becomes naughty; for the very easiest way to command the attention of his mother and the other adults who are with him is by making a disturbance–being bumptious, argumentative, violent tempered. Good, he is left alone; the grown-ups go on with their occupation; he feels neglected, at most he is mildly praised. "Johnny is a nice quiet boy to-day."

But this is very different from the attention he commands when he is naughty. He defies authority, contradicts, rudely asserts his own opinions. For a short time, he becomes a despot, ruling the grown-ups who usually rule him. His sensation of power is intensely enjoyable, and the more disturbance he makes in the nursery life the deeper is his satisfaction. Of course he is sorry afterwards, but his sorrow is not for the first period of successful rebellion, but for the afterwards when his power fails.

Now it is very important for mothers to understand this. *The real problem is to minimise as much as possible the child's enjoyment of naughtiness.*

Any unwisdom on the mother's part, such as her being too emotionally concerned, indulging in nagging or violent anger, may have very serious results. Inevitably the child feels, as he sees his mother's tears and want of control, "I have caused this." Instead of being weak he is the master of his mother. That is why usually he is good after he has been naughty.

But this kind of behaviour is disastrous to the child's character.

Let me tell you rather a striking story to illustrate this kind of nursery conduct. A young boy, who had been

very rude and rebellious was sent to bed. His mother, greatly troubled, went some hours later to his room. He was kneeling praying. She thought he was asking God to forgive him. But this was what she heard: "Please, dear God, forgive my bad mummy for being so unkind to poor little Freddy."

The boy grew up in the most unfortunate way. I cannot give the details and there were, of course, several causes. Yet certainly his character suffered the first wrong in the nursery from an unwise emphasising by his mother of his own importance.

The self-assertive, naughty child is always the child over-occupied with thoughts of himself, and his feelings are unhealthily important to him, just because he 'finds himself for some cause at a disadvantage. And what I wish to insist upon is this–a feeling of inferiority may be painfully fixed in a child and distort the character permanently.

Parents, unconsciously, but very foolishly, emphasise their children's inferiority; they speak of their weakness, tell them they are too little to do this or that, never realising the danger of what they are doing. But the matter is usually more complicated than this. For the inferiority-feeling may be, and often is, induced by some cause which to the parents' (or to other ordinary observers') eyes should not induce such a feeling. The child may be less active than others, not so clever, or so good at games, less attractive than its brothers and sisters. Here are a few very obvious causes which start the little one on its backward path. We all know that the child sees life through a microscope; incidents that seem trivial to the grown-ups are to the children's permanent sources of discouragement.

How much more will inferiority be felt if the unfortunate child, through some parental carelessness or unfortunate circumstances, is generally exposed to the sword of contempt, for which it has no adequate defence. If he is shabby, of an inferior class to his associates, ugly and nervous, dull in school, bad at games, of different tastes from other children–an outcast; his father a dancing-master or a tailor, a Jew or foreigner, or in any way peculiar, not like the fathers of other children–that children feel such things acutely is shown by the readiness with which they boast of their possessions and their father's possessions, of their homes or connections, of the famous deeds and great events connected with their families–if there are none they make them up; they must have something that will give them a position of importance in their own world.

Children are snobs. Parents should do all they can to equalise the position of their children with that of the other children they meet at school and elsewhere. They must never emphasise the class distinctions of adults. Great care ought to be taken in avoiding differences in dress–a shabby hat, a coat or frock that is grown-out-of or is over-worn may do lasting harm, out of all proportion to the saving gained. Another very important matter is pocket-money; the right amount should be given, neither more nor less; both boys and girls, in this respect, should be in a similar position to their companions. Otherwise, they are very certain to develop the dangerous inferiority-feeling, that always lurks, like a dread shadow, behind the child.

Any child that is aggressive, boastful, or unnecessarily rude must be treated in such a way as will

increase his confidence in himself. This seems contradictory, but is true. If the child is snubbed and discouraged, the trouble from which it suffers is sure to increase, for when a group of inter-related circumstances and repeated incidents have permanently induced the feeling of self-depreciation, the child drives back the devastating feelings into the obscure places of the mind, the unseen office of the directing forces that in secret issue the supreme orders that control conduct. It is in order the better to overcome the truth that the child becomes agressively self-assertive, practices a marked boastfulness of behaviour.

We have all seen examples of such a process. The timid assume a forced cheerful geniality and blunder into ill-placed familiarity because they feel so little at home. The short insignificant man struts and is pompous. The plain girl is always more aggressive than her beautiful sister. The boastful child is not more boastful because he thinks too much of himself but because he thinks too little–has insufficient self-confidence. Such children are without courage, and all their pride boils up behind a timid character.

It should always be remembered that the secret, unconscious sense of inferiority lies at the back of most of the forms of childish naughtiness with which I have to deal. When the child asserts itself, it attracts attention. When it is sulky, jealous, destructive, lies, steals, seeks to gain some advantage over others, it does so as a compensation for deficiencies, imagined or real. The supposed deficiency, the attempted advantage (which, for example, may consist in a cultivated power to deceive) may assume strange unreasonable forms. For this reason, it must be frankly confessed that the

task of the parents is often far from easy. The sources of the inferiority-feelings are diverse and complex. The parents, however, can always know when these feelings are starting. The child will be unable to stop his secret trouble from making some escape, for he will suffer too much.

No parent can safely neglect these danger signs.

For this sense of inferiority, unconquered and, indeed, unrecognised and unseen, lies at the root of serious adult crime and vice. It may lead to drink, criminal acts, excessive sexuality–to any form of bad conduct that frees the personality from a feeling of helpless subjection.

There is, however, fortunately another and a brighter side. Good as well as evil may result from this sense of inferiority which, as we have seen, is common to all children. It may lead to the greatest achievements. If self-assertiveness can be combined with a desirable means of self-expression, then one of the elements of genius is present.

The artist pays by his defects for his superiority. His ego-centric character, a witness to some early inferiority-feeling, finds compensation that leads him to absorb everything into the hive of his art; he fills the cells of his power to find expression in words, or sounds, or paint, or steel, with all the honey of experience that life offers to him. His sex impulses too, often extreme or even perverted, provide waste products that vitalise his poems, his pictures, his prophecies, his theories and his schemes.

Defeats and inabilities in childhood lead to the desire for power in some form. The child says, when found at fault and weak, "When I grow up I shall," Thus, when I was a child, I was delicate and very backward, and I could not learn to read. My companions laughed at me, my mother apologised for me to my aunts and others who compared me with their children, or my much cleverer sister. I suffered, but I used to say to myself, "Never mind, when I grow up I shall write books myself." I am sure that I owe to this early deficiency the fact that I am a writer. I think, too, it has helped me to understand children.

Biographers of great men and women will furnish many examples of this kind of compensatory achievement. Demosthenes, the stammerer in his youth, became the greatest orator in Greece. Clara Schumann and Litzmann, the accomplished musicians were deaf. Leonardo da Vinci was born illegitimately. Darwin owes to his father his early interest in flowers and insects.

The advice, then, to the parents of bumptious, boastful and violent-tempered children is this: do all you can to give the child complete self-confidence, for those who are sure of themselves do not need to boast and be aggressive. Encourage every kind of innocent and self-determining activity, so that the child may have harmless means of satisfying his desire to achieve; help him to master some task that he can do well so that his work may compare favourably with what is done by the other children. Remember all children must find satisfaction by feeling powerful in some way. If you do not help them to gain it in a right way, they will certainly do so in a bad way. Above all be most careful never to

hinder or discourage, never allow yourself to praise one child while another child remains in the background.

CHAPTER III

THE SULKY CHILD

THE case of the sulky child seems simple. Its symptoms are easily recognised. The cure of leaving such a child alone often seems to offer relief. Yet it is necessary to investigate the symptoms a little further, and at once we shall find the case more complicated. Without this investigation, sulkiness cannot be understood.

The sulky child is solitary and complains without just cause; he complains of grievances which are hardly, if at all, grievous.

But has the child no grievance?

He does not complain of what really and seriously hurts him. For he himself does not fully know, any more than the average patient knows, the real and deep-seated causes of the disease which troubles him.

We all know how often it is thus with children. They do not know, or will not say, where the shoe pinches. For one thing, and it is very necessary for parents to remember this, they cannot express themselves in a way that the grown-ups will understand. There is always the haunting fear of being censured, of not being thought good. This is much more terrible to children than is usually believed. The child in an adult world has very much the feelings we should have if we were translated, just as we are, into heaven and had to explain ourselves to our God. We should fear to tell much of what we know about ourselves; unconsciously and inevitably we should try to make out a good case. The ordinary parent does partly know this and very commonly attributes naughtiness to some physical cause. "Tommy is irritable of an evening because he is very active and too strong," says one mother. "Janet is very difficult because she feels the heat," observes another mother. "We found out that Harry was dull and moping and not getting on at school because his digestion was out of order," is the observation of a third mother.

But note this; it may well be the other way round. Tommy may be too active and not strong because he is irritable. Janet may be unable to resist the heat because she is difficult, while Harry's digestion is certainly dependent on his dullness and moping. You will see

what I mean. The child is not naughty because it is ill, rather it is ill because it is naughty.

What the parent has to do is to find out why the child is ill. The physical symptoms are, in nine cases out of ten, a sign of some conflict that is hidden.

Of course, the child is quite unaware of this conflict and it would be worse than useless to question him. If he thinks consciously about the matter at all, he will accept the adult explanation of physical troubles as the root cause from which spring the irritability and the sulkiness that are making him so unhappy.

Could the child speak he would, I think, know better than the parents what it is that is wrong. For the real, most frequent causes of sulkiness are indeed difficult for parents to see. They do not see them because they do not want to see them. It is they themselves who are at fault; they jar on the child. Their own conduct makes the home suit the child badly. The unhappy child feels within itself a dreadful conflict. Tongue-tied with authority and with love, the child desires rebelliously to criticise the parents–to be himself. He wishes to judge for himself and to try for himself, to do what he wants and to give up pretending that he wants to do what his parents want.

I have spoken before of the immense strain on the child in continuously keeping up the actor's role. Often there is a reaction, which if it does not find relief in some act of aggressive naughtiness, must cause a nervous condition of which sulkiness, as well as certain physical ailments, are the common signs. It is then that the children judge the parents. Within their young souls the majesty of revered and loved parenthood conflicts

with the awakened desire to be themselves. They want to fix right and wrong more in accord with their unformed and undisciplined desires; in a word, to become independent of adult control. Inevitably the easiest way to prove themselves right is to think the parents wrong. Yet the boy and the girl would like to respect the parents on whom they do feel themselves dependent, in spite of the lapses into rebellion, and to whom they go for help in trouble and not in vain. It is here that the conflict arises, and the trouble is greatly intensified by the careless behaviour of parents; for many parents are found untruthful by their children or at any rate uncandid. They are weak, they threaten, they make stupid mistakes and will not own up, they are unjust, they are shabby. The children, too often have to struggle to respect parents whom they cannot but blame.

The child is like a flower, and the banks where it grows are its world–its home and the school and the friends with whom it comes in contact; the sky above is the parents to whom it looks up as the flower to the sun for gladness and for life. What I mean is this, the child has desires and impulses of its own, but it reflects the changing moods and atmosphere and the small world in which it lives and is terribly dependent on its parents. It is forming and selecting a character. It very largely tries what the effect is of different kinds of conduct, different characters. The child does not itself know what it is or would wish to be. Whenever there is, as often there must be, a mistake made–a clash of two opposing desires–a conflict inevitably occurs, and must find some quick expression in childish naughtiness,

otherwise dullness and unhappiness will arise, and you have the dangerous condition of the sulky child.

I would venture to ask parents to consider this metaphor of the flower more closely. The child wants to suit itself to its world, to be at home in its world. Its undeveloped, uncertain surface reflects, therefore, as well as it can, both the sky above and the banks on either side. If there are deep disharmonies between the two, very different standards of conduct, clashing opinions, opposed desires at home and at school and in the world outside, the child, too, will be disharmonious.

Again, there may be disharmonies in the home itself. The sunny sky of married life may have its blue surface spotted with clouds. The child may find (and no one finds these troubles out as quickly as children) that all is not as it should be, or as it appears to be, in the atmosphere of its home. The father and the mother are not truly mated, they do not think and feel alike and, if this is so, they will not deceive the child however carefully they act and speak to do this. The child must suffer. In the depths behind the bright pearly net of pleasant feeling which the parents cast over each other, there is a greyish depressing and drifting cloud, an ever-present discord and remembered grievances between them. These the child will feel. As the sea reflects the sky, so is the child's sulkiness received from the atmosphere of the adult life about it.

Or it may not be a case of mere reflection; the disharmony that causes the sulkiness may be due to direct action on the part of the parents in some failure to understand the child. We all know the interfering parent who rains down pin-pricking spots, in unwise and too great carefulness as well as in scolding and

irritability; the cause does not matter, but these spots, if continuous, will mark the whole surface of the child's life.

It is wise to help the child to form good habits. Do so while the child is young and does not resent instruction. But if the child has grown older with some bad habits, it is better to leave them uncorrected, than to ruin the character of the child, while correcting comparatively trivial errors. Better let him dirty the carpets with muddy boots, leave his clothes lying about, be unpunctual, then to grow up sullen, complaining, unable to meet the world amicably and in trust. After all the parent need not trouble, strength of character will enable the child later to correct any fault when he comes himself to feel the need for correction. But if the character has been hurt (and this is, alas! a very easy thing to do to any child) he will forever be maimed, no matter what after-mending may take place; a weakness will be left so that there will be greater danger of shipwreck in any hour of strain, at any time of moral difficulty.

Or lastly, (and I may add that of all causes this is the commonest), the child's sulkiness may be due to the fact that the clear waters of childhood have been polluted with feelings of inferiority or of jealousy, so that everything that is reflected in the character is coloured with the falsehood of prejudiced emotions. Of this I have written in other chapters of this book, earlier and later. Remove the child's jealousy, relieve the devastating sense of inferiority, which causes him to feel like the youngest son in the fairy tale, always rather more stupid, more clumsy, and tongue-tied than the rest, and the sulkiness will surely depart of itself.

In conclusion, I must again emphasise the seriousness of this fault. The sulkiness of children, if recurrent, is never unimportant. It marks some hidden mental suffering. Even if these symptoms disappear under happier treatment, there is still need for care. The child's character must be strengthened, and, as far as is possible, rebuilt; the child must be reeducated to have confidence in himself and to trust others. This is not going to be easy. Never must it be forgotten by the parents that their child has been hurt–yes, literally maimed by them or through their carelessness. Most necessary of all is it to find the hidden cause that has given the wound; and afterwards always to remember it in dealing with the child; by this care alone can be prevented the development of a fixed morbid attitude of mind towards the world.

CHAPTER IV

THE JEALOUS CHILD

MY difficulty in writing about the bumptious child was to persuade you that behind the apparent boastfulness, and unknown to the child himself, lay the wound of self-depreciation; a wound induced by some contempt, acutely felt–some thought of lower valuation in which he was valued, or to himself appeared to be valued, in comparison with others.

It was the same with the sulky child; it was not the sulkiness that was important. What must be found out was; why the child was sulky? What hurt was causing him to see life darkly and wrongly.

What I tried to make plain to you was that what mattered was, never the visible symptoms, but always the cause beneath. A cure could be effected only by finding this out and making it plain to the child, and satisfying his deeply hidden trouble.

Both the boastful child and the sulky child present to the world a print derived from a negative on which by some carelessness two pictures have been taken, the one beneath appearing in curious and unexpected ways through the upper picture and causing the most strange distortions, and thus often conveying an impression exactly opposite from the real picture.

My difficulties in this chapter are different. The jealous child, in the majority of cases, is recognised as being jealous. But the ordinary parent takes a light view of "childish jealousy" as often it is called. This is the very gravest mistake. Jealousy in children is never a matter for laughter. Its action is at least as serious as jealousy ever is in the character of an adult. It may do the gravest harm; it inflicts the deepest pain.

This is the first fact on which I would insist.

Jealousy in children is so common an emotional trouble that the failure on the part of most parents to recognise its importance is a serious matter. Never should jealousy be neglected. It will not of itself die down, as is commonly believed, though it may, and usually does, wear down its outward manifestations. But this is not to say that it is dead. It is not. It is pushed deep out of consciousness because the conflict it has caused is too bitter for the young child to solve. There, buried in the child, unconscious, it acts in many adverse ways. It is the fertilizer of ineradicable weeds of

bitterness and hatred in the fair garden of character, weeds that may take all nourishment from the fairest seeds.

At a very early age jealousy of the father stirs in the baby's soul. This may surprise you. But I would ask you for a moment to consider the baby's position. The child is in a small shut-in world with its mother. At first, she occupies all its life. She is the earliest love-object, and of supreme importance in the opening infantile character. Everything starts from her. She is the source of nutrition, and as such the first object towards which the hunger-wish is directed. She is also the supplier of warmth, of comfort, of rest–the personification of shelter and happiness–the starting point of all those interests of the child which lie outside its own body.

But there is another parent who comes as both intruder and friend into this mother-child circle. He plays with the baby, opens up new and delightful ways of interest, but also he talks to the mother, draws her attention from the child, makes him feel left out, little, unimportant, unhappy.

It is in this way jealousy of the father begins to stir in the baby soul. And this feeling will increase if the baby is a boy. The love of the mother may grow to great intensity, which, coupled with the jealousy of the father, will work the greatest evil, especially if the mother is unwise, too tenderly solicitous, too possessive in her love, herself neurotic. In the case of the girl the position is different the baby fixation upon the mother is, as a rule, relieved with growth, as a large part of the love-fund is transferred to the father. Sometimes this does not happen, especially when the jealousy of the girl is aroused by a brother or sister more loved or praised

than herself. Then, indeed, a harmful mother-fixation occurs and the little girl becomes too attached to the mother.

Every mother has to guard against keeping her children too closely bound to herself: a too possessive or undisciplined love on her part may cause the greatest nervous trouble. Jealousy is a destructive factor in families. I feel compelled to emphasise this jealousy of the father because it is so common a danger, active in so many homes. Do we not see that there is a kind of war in families in which the father is one of the hostile forces, while the mother and children are fighting against him?

I cannot enter into the question further for it is one of the greatest difficulty and impossible to treat fully in the limits of this small book. I am at work upon a much larger book, to be called "Parents and Children" in which the difficult position will be dealt with. I hope, however, that I have said enough to show how almost inevitable are these jealous feelings, nearly always unrecognised, between parents and children. What should be remembered is that the boy tends to love his mother and be jealous of his father, while the tendency of the girl is usually in the opposite direction with a too fixed love for the father and jealousy of the mother. In the concluding chapter I shall attempt to show you the tremendous influence this has on the later love-life of the boy and the girl.

There are as well other causes of jealousy in families, almost as common, almost as dangerous. Jealous feelings are very certain to be aroused at the birth of a new baby brother or sister. The child, who, up to then, was the centre of attention, the youngest, the despotic

ruler in the nursery, loses his position of importance, is banished from the mother. The child understands nothing. He feels neglected and unimportant. He suffers all the more because of the mystery with which birth is usually treated. Nothing is properly explained. Where has the baby come from? Why has this thing happened? Why does his mother want anyone but himself? The throne is taken from him and given to the newcomer. The new-born, the youngest, inherits the crown of privilege. What more certain, than that an emotional disturbance should be aroused in the child, who is quite inexperienced and almost always is left unguided by its parents to struggle through the blackness of early jealousy. He hates the new brother or sister–the usurper who has taken his place with his mother.

What can be done to avoid this? Parents should try to give the older child a place of its own. Care must be taken to prevent occasion for jealousy. The child must be given a new world to redress the loss of the old one; again, made to feel important.as for example, he (or, of course, she) should be asked to help the grown-ups in looking after the new baby. He should be given new privileges so that he will feel it is nice to be older; perhaps, a little later sitting up at night, or the coming down from the nursery to meals with mother and father, or something to make up for the baby-joys he has lost. In this way the child can be kept from jealousy as well as being helped onwards on the difficult forward path.

But if this is not done, if the early conflict is not prevented, there may be very likely persistent jealous rivalries between brothers and sisters. Frequently the

fault lies with the parents. Children are urged to be peaceable and loving. They try to be so, but always there is envy and hatred, because one child is cleverer, or older, more praised, or more attractive than the others. The parents fail to recognise and disperse these hostile feelings, and the painful conflict between two opposite sets of feeling–the love and affection and the jealous hatred, is the root of great nervous strain and emotional ill-health.

In large families the middle children are often neglected; the older group and the younger are more interesting, or sometimes it is the younger children who are treated as inferior, are told, "You are too little to do this or that." This sets up a feeling of inferiority, which expresses itself either in humility and lack of effort or in assertiveness and jealousy.

There should be no neglect of these early conflicts, Again I must urge this upon all parents. Much more could be done to guard against them arising; for instance, when one brother or sister is cleverer or more attractive than the other, care should be taken not to let them go to the same school. Especial care is needed if the younger child is the more successful. In a family known to me, where this common-sense precaution was neglected, the older, duller girl became very nervous and developed St. Vitus's dance. In this way she brought about her own cure by having to be taken from school and do lessons at home with her mother. When I talked with this mother, she blamed the school, said they had not understood the older girl for her dullness had now disappeared, and she learnt easily and made quick progress. The mother did not know that she was to blame, that it was her habit of praising her

younger child which had wrought havoc in the sensitive soul of the older child.

It is in such ways as this that parents hinder and even destroy the lives of the children they love. What, then, is the lesson we may learn? Nothing except the old knowledge of the extreme difficulties of parenthood, and the terrible need of the child for understanding and help.

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Possibly I can help parents further by trying to make the position clearer. Jealousy is so important and so common a fault in children that I offer no apology for devoting further space to the subject.

The symptoms of openly expressed jealousy, roughly classified, are hatred, spite, malicious teasing, telling disparaging tales to others, vindictive acts, and causeless anger, aroused on apparently trivial pretexts; and what I wish to impress on parents is this: it is better when the child openly shows its feelings–finds relief in active hostilities for the jealousy it is suffering. The child ought not, therefore, to be unduly blamed, rather the cause of the jealousy must be found and if possible removed. Punishments and harsh treatment will but drive the child into silence, dissimulation and most painful self-accusation. The inevitable result, as I have said already, will be an emotional conflict, probably too painful for the child to bear.

When this has happened relief will be found (for it must never be forgotten that wherever there is a conflict there must be a breaking of the tension in some way) in indirect expression.

A few of the more frequent forms may be given. Whenever a child has night-terrors, calls for its mother, will not sleep alone, it is suffering from jealousy, usually jealousy of the father. This night-naughtiness is a very simple device on the child's part to gain for himself (or herself) the attention of the mother. As the child grows older resistance in school against the authority of the teacher is another sign of early jealous rebellion against the father. This is the reason why boys are so much more often in rebellion at school than girls. They are finding expression for a conflict which was not got rid of in the nursery.

There are many things that appear to us as simple, when in reality the cause is complex, dating far back to some early emotional trouble, which ought to have been prevented, *and could have been prevented*, if the parents had had sufficient knowledge to detect and deal with the trouble when it arose.

I would strongly urge the importance of parents giving greater attention to the spontaneous utterances and acts of their children. It is these that will give the clue as to what is troubling the child at any particular time. Direct questioning, as a rule, is quite useless. Children cannot be open to adults. But if the parent has intelligence and some knowledge, and will wait with patience and watch, the child will almost certainly give itself away and the parent will find the guiding clue.

Care should always be taken to note any dreams the children may have and tell you about. If they do not talk of their dreams, they should be encouraged to do so. Dreams are exceedingly important. For in his dreams the child expresses, though usually in a disguised form,

the hidden wishes that cannot find an expression in the waking life.

A boy of nine had a dream which he told his parents. His mother was in a shop, and a man on a bicycle, dressed as an officer, came along the road; he, the little boy, rushed to the bicycle, stopped it, flung the man off and killed him. In telling the dream the boy said, "I prevented him getting to mother." This dream is so clear that I need not wait to interpret, beyond saying that the father of the boy was an officer and that he rode a bicycle. It will cause no surprise to anyone, with even a rudimentary knowledge of the emotional troubles of childhood, to know that this boy has developed very serious nervous symptoms.

It is, unfortunately, very common for the original childish jealousy, and particularly if directed against the father, to re-appear at any period of the later years of childhood and during adolescence. And this hostility is likely to be greatly increased if the father acts unwisely and himself shows a hostility he will not acknowledge, in too great harshness and failure in understanding his son. This drives the boy back to his mother, the two are joined against the father, always a situation of the very greatest peril for the child's emotional health.

Inevitably difficulties arise wherever there is any unhappiness in the home, any disharmony between the father and the mother. Another less usual, but terribly serious cause of jealousy arises if one of the parents has married again and the children are, therefore, living with a step-father or mother.

There is in my opinion always hostility in these cases of changed parents, and I repeat this hostility does least

permanent harm when it is openly shown, for then it finds relief in action. If this is not done there is certain to be trouble of some kind.

The trouble sometimes may be lessened, or even got rid of, if a fortunate chance provides an opportunity by which the pent-up jealous feelings may be transferred to someone else; that is, to some person to whom the child feels no special obligations of respect or gratitude.

The idea of "transferring" a feeling may be a little strange to you. Yet everyone knows that if you are angry with someone and dare not show your hostile feelings, you are liable to be angry with little cause as soon as you are at home with those familiar to you. The boy who is afraid of his father is likely to be a bully; he takes what he has suffered out of those weaker than himself. And it is the same process with the suppressed jealous feelings. They fortunately find an escape in indirect and comparatively harmless channels.

I have known a boy who was very jealous of his father. He was also too much attached to his mother, being in that most unfortunate position of an only child. As a consequence, he suffered terribly from jealous feelings. At the same time, he was fond of his father who always had been kind to him. The boy was thus torn and thrown from one mood to the other so that he could not control or comprehend his own feelings. In this way a conflict was aroused between love and jealous hatred, and very serious nervous symptoms developed. The poor boy became morose and sulky. He failed at school, had to be put down into a lower class, was generally retrogressive and unhappy.

His recovery was curious and came unsought. One summer holiday a school friend, younger than himself, came to spend some weeks with him. The boy was of course a stranger in the house, but, being affectionate and quick to respond to friendliness, was soon on the lap of his friend's mother. From that moment the son was furious with him and entirely unable to control his rage. So violent, indeed, did his resentment become that the two boys had to be kept apart and very shortly the young visitor was sent home. But to the surprise of everyone the boy who was left grew better. These outbursts against his friend had relieved the violence of his jealousy to his father. The conflict-creating feelings had been dissipated by finding an object on which they could openly, and without deep remorse, be vented.

This case is so curious and so instructive that I would ask you specially to consider it. The parents of this boy were greatly distressed at his behaviour; they regarded his unkindness to his little friend and violent outbursts of temper with the deepest concern. But here they were wrong. The rage was violent because for so long it had been repressed, and its escape now was a sign of health, an effort the boy was making to rid himself of an unbearable hidden trouble.

Jealousy may find many ways of reconciling its feelings with the demands made by the conscience–demands imposed on us by the society in which we live. The child must not hate its mother or its father; but if they prefer one of the other children, then a situation will arise in which the jealous feeling must find some relief in expression. I know a family where the son was better loved than the daughter. The daughter loved her mother exceedingly and could not endure the situation.

To ease it she began, when about ten years old, to console herself with a day-dream. It could not be that her dear mother, her real mother, cared less for her than for her younger brother. The girl found comfort for herself in imagining a very common story: she was not living with her true mother, but had another real mother all to herself. And she would in the future show her real mother how good and clever she was, outshining her brother. As this fantasy continued, she became ill with grave nervous symptoms which developed into a severe attack of chorea (St. Vitus's dance).

This disastrous life of self-centered, intense imagination seems largely to have ruined her later existence. It disturbed her power of normal love, fixing her desire on the ideal rather than the real person. Just in the same way as she rejected her mother and loved a make-believe mother, so now the image of an unknown, constructed substitute came between her and any lover, so that she found no satisfaction in mating. Being attractive, she has been admired by many men and has been engaged more than once, but in each case, the lover has been discarded for no adequate reason. She behaves in all love affairs with a capricious unkindness, very difficult to pardon, if one did not understand.

(All day-dreaming–the loving of imaginary persons to compensate for the actual or supposed unkindness of the existing parents or friends, or thinking of deeds to be done and success to be achieved by magic, as it were, and not by effort–is exceedingly harmful for children. It turns them away from reality and confuses their power for effort in reasonable action. This

important question will be dealt with in a later chapter when we consider the bad habit of telling lies).

In these two cases I have given, the jealousy felt by the boy to the father and by the girl to the mother, both found relief, the one by the transference of the jealous feelings, the other by the much more dangerous ways of make-believe and day-dreams.

But suppose no free expression for such strong feelings is permitted. The boy and the girl know it to be wrong to hate their father or mother who have always been good and considerate to them. Everyone tells them it is wicked to show hatred of their parents. They cannot understand the reason of their own wickedness, so they refuse to face or acknowledge the jealousy that they ought not to have, pretend it does not exist, push the hated feeling away. But these feelings do not really disappear. In a hidden world they suck the vitality of the young character, cramp the roots of the forces of life. It is as a house divided against itself and one, moreover, in which the very head of the house, the one who should guide and inspire, languishes dull and tired. Then the trouble becomes too great to be borne. The secret conflict and the disorder set up hysteria.

I would ask each parent who reads this book to remember that all this grave result arises from suppressing the child's jealousy. Because we adults say that the child must not feel jealous, that it is wrong to have such feelings, the child, trained to obey the parents, forces them away from his consciousness until he can no longer squarely face the position. He turns back his trouble into the darkness of apparent non-existence where in secret it works its deadly destruction.

What is hysteria?

Hysteria is the display of feelings which are out of all proportion or relation to that which seems to cause them! Such feelings are derived from some great shock or unsolved conflict of emotion in the past. The feelings of to-day are echoes of old disturbances. Thus, the child who has once suffered a great terror will tremble at the creaking of a door. It is like what we know in the physical world. The healed wound leaves a sore place on which the gentlest touch is agony.

And the pity is so little can be done. It is useless to argue with hysteria. The original cause must be exposed. Nothing can be done except by uncovering the old wound, the memory must be taken back to that forgotten event in the past, which hurt too terribly to be remembered, and to which the hysterical feelings of the present are appropriate. This backward tracing to a forgotten pain, is an extremely difficult and painful process, but unless it is done there will always remain the tendency to emotional trouble, ready to break out under any stress. The man or the woman thus handicapped is never really safe.

Now this is why parents should exercise the greatest care not to treat lightly in their children any signs of jealous troubles, which, if left unsolved, are almost certain to cause conflicts children are quite unable to face or understand.

I should not be honest if I did not say that, in my opinion, it is impossible to avoid all jealous feelings in children.

All that can be done by the parents is to watch carefully for the first coming of jealousy. And if any

child is jealous *to allow it openly to be jealous*. Repression of these destructive feelings does the greatest harm. The safest plan is to let the trouble wear itself out.

If, however, the child's own conscience, as is very usually the case, acts as an inhibition which prevents the jealousy from finding relief in expression, the easiest way is to "transfer" the adverse feelings to some other person, as was explained in the case of the young boy who transferred the jealousy he felt for the father to his school-friend. There is no other cure that I know. To divert the child's mind, to make it forget by work or by play, may give some relief, but it is only a palliative. The mischief goes on, and indeed, grows worse if it remains unrecognised and unsolved.

CHAPTER V

THE DESTRUCTIVE CHILD

I HAVE several times referred to nervous strain. I have spoken as if nervous strain was always due to a conflict of impulses, a struggle of instincts–of what the child desires to do contesting against the conduct approved and praised by those around him. But strain is not always due to conflict. The word "nervous" naturally mates with "active." Passionate people also are active, while apathetic people are inactive.

There is, of course, the question of the reason behind. Why one child, as a rule, is eager and another child dull. But activity may be born of happy surroundings, which provide the child with the right amount of stimulus and of the right kind, neither too much so that interest turns into excitement, nor too little so that interest flags. And when interest and impulse are yoked, action is the natural result, and will, if completed and performed, dissipate the excess of feeling which naturally accompanies it.

A sound truth underlies this fact in dealing with childish destructiveness.

Suppose, for example, that the child hates someone, to strike them is a relief; and all children desire to strike when they hate. But if they hate and dare not strike, restrained by habits of respect and affection, they do not allow their hatred to lead on to action, thus there is a considerable amount of strain caused in them by the holding back of the pent-up (as we usually call it) feeling.

Now, it is a relief to the strain caused by feelings, baulked of a direct expression in appropriate action, to perform even an indirect or useless action. Anxiety may cause people to start up and pace the room anxiously. Rage, as we know, clenches its fists, bends its arms, stands in a posture of attack, even when there is no natural antagonist present. An enraged man takes up any piece of furniture, a book, a China ornament near at hand, and dashes it to the ground. The rending of garments (as Bible readers know) is an Oriental sign of mourning.

You will see what this implies. Destructiveness in children marks nervous disturbance–baulked desire. By destructiveness, I mean, of course, deliberate destructiveness, breaking of furniture or machinery (common in boys), harming other people's possessions, not a mere pulling things to pieces to see how they are made. These nervous disturbances may be due to any of the already explained causes–jealousy, a consciousness of inferiority, real or mistaken, dislike of and opposition to parents and teachers and those in authority, resentment and rebellion, helpless feelings of repression and thwarted desire for self-assertion and for opportunity to live without being regulated by adult rules. I have known a girl who was very jealous of her step-father-her mother had married twice. She destroyed all the drawing-room ornaments in an outbreak of apparently unexplained passion. I was consulted by her mother. I recommended patience and very strong efforts on the part of the step-father to win her love.

Nervous children under strain tend to bite their nails, and to adopt other similar bad habits, to destroy things, and to act cruelly to animals and children younger and weaker than themselves. A boy, about ten years old, of a specially gentle and loving nature, was placed under a tremendous nervous strain, owing to a divorce and change of mothers; almost directly afterwards, to the surprise of everyone who knew him, he began to act in a very cruel manner to a dog, which before he had idolised, having had it to sleep in his room at night, and as his inseparable companion by day.

Everyone will be able to think of children who show these sudden lapses into bad conduct. In all such cases

the parents must seek for the deeper causes. It is useless to scold the child for the immediate fault. It must be understood clearly that the child destroys things because it is driven on by an impulse without conscious intention and, therefore, if you argue and scold, pointing out the foolishness and wrongness of the habit, he or she, though this fault is more common in boys, agrees with you. He knows as well as you can tell him that the destructiveness is useless and unfair to the owner of the property.

What he does not know and what you, the parent, ought to know so that you may be able to help him, is that his action is symbolic, a kind of expiatory expression for something within him. The child often suffers more than the adult at all understands, for while he is sorry for what he has done himself, dislikes intensely the destruction and also is sorry for having grieved you, he is conscious as well of exhilaration and a strong feeling of liberation. And because he does not understand these conflicting emotions (ambivalent is the scientific word) he pushes the whole incident away from him, will not think about it, and each time he does this, matters grow worse.

The desire for destruction will increase. It may become a passion very difficult indeed to change. More and more the instinct of the moment will overcome the arguments of reason, the narrow prescription of teaching,

and even his own conscious inclination towards good conduct.

For the act of destroying does relieve and soothe the child. So far it has had a good effect. But the relief gained is temporary, as well as greatly neutralised by the bad effects of which I have just spoken. The confusion in the child necessarily increases his nervous trouble which arises from his being quite aware of his own naughtiness, while at the same time he is conscious of his pleasure and relief of tension by the destruction he has caused.

Now, as I already have made plain, the parent must try to find out why the child needs relief. It is the only way in which the trouble can be helped and the destructiveness stopped with any safety. Nothing can be done until the cause is found.

This will not be easy. Any direct questioning is sure to give barren results. The child does not know what is the matter, does not understand at all why he gets pleasure from destroying things. I must drive home this unconsciousness on the part of the child though I risk wearying my readers by repetition. But so often I have found even intelligent parents very stupid on this matter. They will ask the child, "Why did you break that? What made you so careless?" not understanding that *it is their duty, and not the child s, to find the answer to this question.*

Also, I must urge again the necessity of the parent paying the closest attention to the child's unconscious acts, watching carefully his games, noting his voluntary remarks and the information he gives about himself in his unrehearsed hours of play. For in this way only can be detected the trouble causing the emotional conflict of which the destructive activity is the sign.

Further, I repeat that till this is done the only course of safety is a negative one-non-interference. By non-interference the dangers leading almost certainly to increased emotional disturbance will be avoided. But if you stop the destructiveness without relieving the emotional cause, the baulked wish, the hurt affection, the thwarted curiosity, or whatever is the source of the trouble, is but thrust back further–repressed to work havoc in the psyche. The after-result is certain–inevitably the trouble will break out later in a worse form. Like the man in the Bible story who got rid of one devil only to be possessed by seven devils worse than the first. And very probably this trouble will work in secret, and the damage done will not manifest itself until your child has grown up and left your protection and your care.

One plain word then to end.

Do not be angry with your child when he becomes destructive–breaks things continuously and without visible cause. Sit down and think, search your own heart, be truthful with yourself. Ask yourself this question. Is there any cause, any failure in my love for this child, any help I could have given him, any disturbance in the harmony of his home that has given the hurt to his tender and young and mouldable soul that drives him, by the pain he suffers, to act destructively and cruelly?

CHAPTER VI

THE INQUISITIVE CHILD

IN the last chapter I mentioned thwarted curiosity as one of the causes of emotional disturbance. I want now to call attention to the children who exhibit an unreasoning curiosity about everything, opening drawers, looking into the envelopes of other people's letters, searching excitedly for what they do not want.

Here we meet with a case of spontaneous symbolic action. The peculiarity of such activity is that if you ask the child, "What are you doing?" he gives an evasive answer; also he usually shows annoyance at being questioned.

He tells you he is looking for something or wishes to know what is inside some box or some drawer; but he cannot name the thing he is seeking, and the insistence of the action, the importance attached to it, the anxious way in which the search is carried out are not explained.

Again, we have to ask the question, why does the child do this? What is it that urges him to act like a "Peeping Tom"? For he is urged. You will find this habit of needless prying almost impossible to check. It may persist into adult life. I have known a man, well educated and intelligent, who, whenever he is upset, begins to search for something he does not want. He will disturb the entire house, and though gentle in disposition he grows vexed, even angry, if he is disturbed in his search. He realises the foolishness of his action but he cannot explain it; he just feels he is compelled to search.

This seeking action is symbolic. It implies that the search for the thing that is not wanted, the curiosity over something of no interest at all, is a substitute action for something that is wanted–something about which knowledge has been desired, and desired so much that it will not be denied. It is a curiosity so real that the thwarting of it has started emotional trouble of which these searching acts are the symbol or sign.

This substitute formation is a common emotional process in children. The child pries, opens drawers and letters, aimlessly searches for knowledge *he does not want because there is some knowledge he wants tremendously badly, but cannot ask you about.*

Now, what is this knowledge which the child wants and cannot get? It is of course knowledge about something forbidden.

I spoke in the introductory chapter of the mistaken idea that the sex interests were absent even in the youngest children. In the nursery years the child begins to develop its first curiosity about sex, usually expressed by the question, "Where does the new baby come from?"

Parents are greatly to blame for not answering the questions of their children, and for being blind to their natural curiosity. I referred in the chapter on jealousy to the mystery with which in most homes birth is clouded. There need be no spoken words to make the child feel that something hidden and disgraceful is happening.

Adults are surprisingly ignorant of the affectability of children–their quick response to every kind of influence.

In the case of the birth of another child–an usurper who takes the older child's place–this affectability is exceedingly acute on account of the emotional disturbance, in excitement, in jealousy, in hatred, and the arousing of the always harmful inferiority-feelings. And in this way the very certain interest and investigations of the child into what is happening are confused and connected with what is shameful and wrong; while the trouble is aided, and usually in the worst possible manner, by the sharpest observations and deductions made by the child from unconsidered actions and overheard remarks of the parents, and of servants and other adults, none of whom have any idea of the child's watchfulness or his curiosity in this matter.

We underestimate very much the activity of the intelligence of children which begins to work at a very early age. *We think they are not interested in these matters because we do not want them to be interested.* And they, with the almost uncanny sagacity which children show, understand this adult desire only too well and too quickly.

Few parents are aware of the confusion and hurt that may be caused to a child by the false theories and untrue ideas of birth–the result of their own stupid adult silences and even more stupid hints and allusions; ideas that fix themselves into children's minds, where they cannot be checked owing to imperfect knowledge and immature development. In this way harm is often started that will be determinative of the gravest evils in the later adult life.

I must insist (though I know that by doing so I shall antagonise some parents who do not believe it because they will not believe it,) that there is no escape from this sexual curiosity on the child's part, which is, indeed, entirely normal and unavoidable; and that all opposition set against its satisfaction is dangerous. The degree of curiosity differs of course in different children, but I do not think it is absent from any normal child. If they do not question their elders, certainly they will talk with one another. It should also be remembered that curiosity will be kept active and strengthened by any mystery, any hiding of the truth. Other matters being equal, the child thinks much less of what it knows and understands than of what it does not know, but wants to find out. Bans and prohibitions almost always defeat their object. Label any subject to your child as improper, and that it is naughty of him to speak about

it and you set up certainly an abnormal and often very harmful curiosity.

You will see now, I think, what I have all this time been trying to make plain, and will understand better my statement that curiosity in children continuously displayed without reason or purpose is a very usual sign of thwarted sexual curiosity. No longer will it appear a mere fantastic statement. I trust I have made clearer to you how this takes place, how easy, indeed, it is, and how frequent.

Again, I must emphasise that the child gains the greatest relief from this makeshift curiosity. That is why he persists in his habits of peeping and prying, in spite of your scoldings and punishments. He must persist, unless you deaden his character so terribly by your ill-judged repressions that even this substitute relief is closed. Your child will then, probably, find some other make-believe comfort; he will bite his nails, pick his nose, or other much worse bad habits may begin; or again, the emotional disturbance may be so acute that it becomes impossible for the child to face, so that he fails in achieving any kind of symbolic replacement. The thwarted and emotionally over-charged curiosity is thrust back into the psyche, where it remains a cause of ill-health and uncleanness, until that time, in the later adult years, when the harvest of tares is reaped from the bad seed that has been sown.

The parents have the greatest responsibility. A child of four or even younger may begin to ask questions of its mother, simply and spontaneously. As soon as the questions are put they should be answered, quite simply, and in such a manner that the child can understand. *It is the child who must guide the parent.* I regard

this as the most urgent rule for the mother; *never to arouse sexual curiosity but always to satisfy it when it is present.*

I should, however, be giving a wrong impression if I left the matter here, so that this answering of children's questions seemed to be a simple thing. It is not simple. For each child, as for each adult, the problems of sex are personal problems. Instruction here is not and never can be like teaching the child about other things, That is what so many of the modern advocates of sex-education so entirely overlook.

In every child, as it has been my purpose to show you, there are conflicts of jealousy, of love, of hate, which determine already its response to the parental teaching.

I cannot here treat at all adequately this difficult question; it is one on which I have written elsewhere. (Sex Education and National Health.) I can say only that what above all else is the necessary duty of the parent is to watch for the child's unconscious betrayal of its own curiosity. I mean by this that the parent has to find out just what part of the problem is troubling the child at that time.

Again, I must insist that sex-education is an emotional education; that is why it is so difficult. I may perhaps make this plainer to you by means of two illustrations. A little girl became troubled and nervously ill soon after the birth of a baby brother. The symptoms were serious, so that the child was placed under special care. Many months of patient work were required to get at the back of what was troubling this young child. All the facts of birth were carefully and lovingly explained to her; but this was not what was the matter; she had found it out already for herself from the talk of a

servant. Her special trouble was that her mother had not trusted her, had not told her the truth. Only with the greatest difficulty was her confidence restored, and it was not until this was done that the nervous symptoms and moral faults, that had so much alarmed her parents, were cured.

The second case–that of a much older girl–is quite different. Here the trouble rested in the parent giving too much knowledge, not too little. This girl had from her childhood been brought up on very modern lines: she had been taught about flowers and birds; wisely made to understand her own body; but the holiness and beauty of sex had been over-emphasised by a neurotic and not too happily mated mother. The latter circumstance accounts for a strong disharmony in the psyche of the girl. Puberty brought her troubles she had not been taught to face–feelings and sensations that were not at all explained by her mother's over-idealised teaching. This poor girl felt herself wicked and horrid. She was, as we should expect, quite unable to speak to her idolised mother, and, unfitted to face her trouble alone, she became nervously ill. Melancholia was feared; but fortunately, her suffering was discovered by a wise friend and the help she wanted was given to her.

It has seemed worth while to record these two cases, as I feel they will make plainer than any mere statement I can make how complicated the problem is, and how wise and how loving parents need to be before they can help their children.

CHAPTER VII

THE THIEVING CHILD

IN the next chapters I have to speak of the faults of stealing and lying. These are commonly regarded by parents as far more serious faults than boastfulness, sulkiness, jealousy, destructiveness, curiosity–the faults hitherto dealt with.

I can to this extent be assuring; the thieving and lying are not signs of a tendency to thieve and lie. They must not be regarded as affording proof of original sin. Rather they are special manifestations of the effects arising from great underlying causes. It will be found that it is not necessary, and indeed not wise, to attempt directly to correct the faults themselves. The really necessary duty of the parent is to track down the trouble to its source; to find out Where? How? and Why? the child has been hurt. It will then be possible to counteract and neutralise this hurt, which to a certain extent should be explained to the child himself, so that, understanding what it is drives him to thieve or lie, he may help in his own cure.

There is one thing more that it is necessary to make plain. Though these faults are not in themselves a sign of any moral failure in the child's character, our treatment of them–our adult stupidity in understanding the difficulties and the sufferings of the child often hound on the stealing child into the thief, the child who lies into the man or woman who has no consciousness of truth.

We make criminals of children because we are blind; because our eyes are too blinkered by the complexes in our own characters to face the truth of our failures in education, which in nine cases out of every ten, are the cause of the faults which we condemn in them. We also cause the most heart-breaking tragedies. It is appalling even to contemplate the suffering brought quite uselessly upon children by grown-up foolish ignorance.

We grown-ups show too little imagination in our treatment of children. We rarely remember their sensitiveness, nor do we consider the terrible advantage

(from the point of view of the child) that we possess just in being grownup. And nothing is to the child plainer as a sign of this grown-up freedom than the power we have to spend money when we like and how we like. That is why the taking of money is one of the most common symbolic acts for a child's hidden wish for love or power.

I do not hesitate to state that in the great majority of cases of boyish thieving the reasons for the act must be sought in some deeply hidden cause marking a want which the boy does not understand. The taking of small sums of money or other pilfering, acts as a covering mask and has no direct connection with crime.

And what I desire to emphasise with every power I have is the cruelty and uselessness of our punishments. For the finer and more sensitive the character of the child, the more certainly will our failure to understand destroy.

Is it necessary for me to write more to convince you? That infantile theft is often pathological, is proved by the fact that the objects stolen are useless to the child; that they are hidden away and, as a rule, soon forgotten; and further, that the child apparently forgets, or almost forgets, what he has stolen or how he took it. Some children have a passion for stealing certain objects, which they take over and over again. Those who have had anything to do with delinquent children will know these symptoms.

In nearly all cases the thieving is repeated over long periods; although each act may be followed by violent remorse. Parents should know that this sorrow, especially if emotionally excessive, serves only to

increase the tendency to a fresh repetition of theft. For remorse fixes the child's attention on stealing and on his wickedness in stealing. And this fixity of attention in itself, is a kind of rehearsal of the act; this is very likely to lead to an actual performance of it. Childish remorse is, no doubt, gratifying to parents, but almost invariably it is harmful to the child.

Whenever the child thinks how bad he is, how wrong and disastrous an act would be, he is in danger of being compelled to perform that act. Most of us have experienced this, but we forget its application to our children. Once think how terrible it would be to fall down the precipice and the idea of jumping down approaches.

Remorse is a form of temptation. And all forms of temptation should, in dealing with children, if possible, be avoided. If your child steals money, do not leave money lying about. Also, even if he has stolen money several times, express no faintest suspicion as to his not using honourably any money entrusted to him for some necessary purpose, such as paying railway fares or buying a school-book. Never be suspicious over the change that such a child brings you. As he steals from a feeling of inferiority, and, in particular, because through jealousy he feels himself less blessed with the love of those about him than other more confident children, any sign of your not being able to treat him like the others, not able to trust him, must render him more liable to err.

If the thieving child were treated with sympathy and understanding, and loved and helped instead of being blamed and often cruelly punished, there would be few grownup thieves.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LYING CHILD

THE lies of children arise out of something that parents and grown-ups regard as charming. I mean the child's habit of dreaming itself into an imaginary life. This life always is one in which the child appears in a favourable position.

Many children conjure up imaginary playmates. In all such cases, the real child is the leader and superior of the make-believe child. Such nursery-pretences may be continued, for intervals, over long periods. They enable the child to achieve its wishes without effort. He becomes prominent, obtains a friend, enters into life as the superior of someone else.

The child may dream that he will, or is, rescuing from fire or from water, someone (often the imaginary companion) who is in danger. By this heroism, the gratitude of the person saved and the admiration of those around may be won. Or the dreamer pictures himself (or herself) very clever, top of the school class, or exalted in rank, endowed with wealth and position. Or lastly, the dreamer succeeds in attaching himself to someone of high rank, often a new wonderful parent, whose special favour and love is gained.

In numerous cases where children dream of being grown-up and of having grown-up occupations, it is the apparent power of controlling their parents (especially the father) and other adults, that attracts them to the life of a policeman, a teacher, or an engine-driver.

> *These day-dreams are egoistic and self-flattering. They are formed by wishing to be, or to do, what the dreamer feels he (or she) has not done in real life.*

The dream is a consolation for failure in real achievements. It is, therefore, the result of a thwarted wish. The child feels himself little and weak, but he wishes to be big, strong and powerful so badly, that he imagines himself to be a policeman, who is always big, very powerful, and who orders about even fathers. The child's pretending is a balm of imagination applied to a wound inflicted by reality.

This is its danger. The mischances of reality must be met by real alterations of character or conduct, not by imaginary compensatory dreams.

No other lesson, perhaps, which parents have to teach their children, is quite so important as this. The

little boy who wants to be a policeman to control father, should be entrusted with the care of a younger brother or sister. He must be praised or rewarded, if he does the task well, and encouraged to try again, not blamed, if he does it badly, so that he may come unconsciously to feel that real achievement is more satisfactory than dream achievements.

It is obvious that the fantasy, as the daydream is technically called, leads directly to the fantasy-making lie. This is the more common form of lie, by which the child tries to make himself appear different from what he is–more important, and not any longer less important than others. Frequently the lie is the result of the wished-for dream life, pictured by the child in his make-believe life: what is said is an expression of something the child has dreamt about. *Thus the lie is true to him though untrue to the adult who hears him.*

As a remedy (not so much for the lying itself as for the mental uneasiness at the back of the lying), an attempt must be made, (in ways such as I have suggested), to give the child some social activities or simple duties in which he will have a place of his own. Never forget that what the child needs is liberation from any consciousness of inferiority. Success is necessary for health and for moral conduct. How many boys, for instance, who do badly at lessons, are saved from ill results because they are good at cricket, or have a decent position as a scout, or in some other way attract the favourable attention of their school-fellows.

Then, it must be pointed out to the child, how impossible it is to win success and power over others by the methods of the day-dream and cinema-impersonations. In these ways, the child's sense of reality

must be increased. No fixed rules can be laid down. Treatment must vary with the child. Such methods must be tried as in each case will encourage the, child to make successful efforts to achieve innocent prominence and a good position in the real world, not in the make-believe world. At all costs, and against any resistance, the child must be trained to face the nursery and school-room situations as they are, not as he wants them to be.

If one child is not very clever, he (or she) must be taught to accept this and shown how he can make up for this defect by working hard and taking pains. If another child is weak and delicate, there must be no pretence of strength, but encouragement may be given to strive for success in ways that do not call for physical ability. *Let the child feel that he has to make the best of himself, not pretend he is better than he is.*

There is terrible danger to happiness and to health in fantasying. For the day will come, as the child grows up, when reality must be faced and disaster is almost certain. More and more the day-dreamer becomes unfitted for life. His attention and his interest is turned inwards on himself, away from the world of effort and action. He is an introvert. The disaster to character here is so great that the parent should be on the watch for the first signs of this failure in meeting the truth of life. Such a child must be stimulated to work and to play with others; he should not be allowed to spend much of his time alone.

Let me tell you about a young girl with a strong tendency to introversion, who was very wisely treated by her mother. It was once said that if she was sent on an errand to one place, hours after she would be found in another place, having completely forgotten what she

was originally sent out to do. Her mother did not scold her or make her in any way a centre of attention, but she arranged always for her to experience the results of her negligence and absence of mind. Thus, one day, when she forgot to order the dinner, the whole family dined off bread, greatly to the girl's humiliation. Through lessons of this kind, she was taught to see the real situation; and, after years of careful training, she was able to sublimate her imagination and become a well-known and successful writer. She ceased dreaming unprofitably and became very practical, though still much disliking details.

This fantasy-making, as you will readily see for yourself, is connected with most kinds of children's lies, but for convenience in advising how to deal with the wrong-doers (or sufferers as I should prefer to call them), I would divide children's lies into three further classes.

I have spoken already of the boastful child. The lies–and they are frequent–told by such! children arise out of self-contempt. This leads to self-assertion. Such assertiveness, even of falsehoods, may be connected with aims socially useful, as when the child dreams of gaining fame by performing great and heroic exploits. Or, and this is considerably more dangerous, the fear of failure, of *not* appearing well, may lead to the child insisting on its dullness, weakness, illnesses, deficiencies–shelter may even be sought by boastfulness over telling lies. Such an attitude will have two causes: —

1) It arises because the child is afraid of failing. He (or she) needs to be reassured, made confident. Point out in what he does excel.

2) Or it may arise out of a desire to contradict and annoy. Children as well as adults are much moved by opposition and counter-will. Give them as much freedom as possible.

Note further that the feeling of inferiority as I have had again and again to point out, often has its origin in obscure and highly unreasonable causes, very difficult to track to their source. But the feeling may be connected with physical smallness, weakness, malformation, or the inferiority of any limb or organ, all of which may very easily give rise to a corresponding character-inferiority.

Other common causes are want of beauty or attractiveness; or, the child being younger than others (in which case the trouble is much increased and often started by foolish remarks that it is too young for this or that), or being placed in intimate relationships, as for instance at school, with companions who are richer or of higher social pretensions, or indeed, any circumstance for which contempt is normally expressed by those whose opinion the child values.

I have pointed out already the dangers arising from these feelings of inferiority. I would again emphasise this danger. Any child who feels inferior quickly deteriorates directly he loses self-confidence. It is one of the most urgent and difficult tasks of parents to guard against this. I say the task is difficult because the way must not be made too easy by an over-loving hiding of the inferiority of the child, but on the other hand the way must not be made too hard by constant insistence on the child's faults, a practice which does nothing except discourage him, thus inevitably increasing the inferiority-feelings which are the cause of his faults.

Always when the fault is mentioned, encouragement should be given by showing the ways in which improvement may be made, and every possible help must be given to make this possible for the child's attainment.

Now, finally, two other classes of childish lies may be distinguished. First, the lie as an excuse; the lie of evasion, of defence, told by the child to avoid blame or punishment. It is used as a means of escape from the consequences of wrong-doing. This kind of lie is known to most parents.

Now I would plead for these young offenders because they are usually very sensitive as children always are. In many ways children are akin to savages. I spoke of this in my introductory chapter. Now, panic is the usual condition of mind of the savage. He sees enemies in everything; in trees, in stones, in thunder and lightning, in the flight of birds, in fact, in all things around him. It is much the same with the child, Parents do not realise that the child not only sees the world through a microscope but for it a moment is a thousand years. *Its fear, not of doing wrong, but being found out doing wrong, is really a most powerful courage–destroying emotion*. The child is paralysed thinking of the punishment to follow. For to be shut off from his world, to be called a liar, to have his brothers and sisters told not to speak to him, for instance, is an enormous punishment. It makes the child an outcast, leaves him defenceless. We need not wonder much if he takes the ready escape of a lie. To expect him to do otherwise, if his sensitiveness is such that he has been unable to overcome his fear, is really rather like asking him to follow the behaviour of the boy on the burning deck (hated by me in my

childhood), who did not run away, but waited to be burned.

Sympathy may, however, be felt for parents too. They may truly say that they do not punish or blame at all severely, and they see no reason why they should be regarded with so much fear. But so might the civilised man argue about foolishness in the savage. Often the deep causes of fear are obscure and of very old origin. They may arise by suggestion or as shadows left from a remote past when fear was necessary for the preservation of life. Or, if of more recent growth, very likely they are attributable to some pain unconsciously inflicted by the parent–a pain forgotten by the child, repressed out of his consciousness because of the painfulness of the experience. This pain is usually connected with childish jealousy or some careless parental hurt to the child's pride.

Lastly there is the lie that aims at obtaining direct advantages. Usually, it is told to attract attention and increase the child's feeling of importance by acquisition of property. This type of lie resembles the theft. It is the lie fraudulent.

I would recall to you again what was said in connection with the child who steals, as to the way in which property relieves the feeling of inferiority. Money and the spending of money gives importance. To spend money at shops, for the child, is the easiest form of grown-up behaviour; the shop assistant is deferential–the boy (or girl) customer orders him about. Again, a newly obtained possession gratifies, in a peculiar way, the acquisitive instinct, always so strong in children. Property with them, as with the savage, is part of the

personality, and has a distinct value as a sign, or kind of decoration, enhancing individual importance.

This to some extent is felt by normal civilised adults, but as a motive directing conduct it is much more powerful in the savage and the child. And the less sure the child is of himself, of the love of those around him, of his position and importance in his world, the stronger it will be.

Any child who shows this abnormally strong feeling for property (and this will be recognised most easily by an obsession for collecting quite useless things), should be given opportunities to earn money to buy the possessions he desires, by some useful work in the home. Also rewards may be offered for the gaining of some school position or prize, or even for the giving up of some bad habit. Care must, however, be taken in this case that the child is able to do what is asked. If the bad habit, as is probable, is a substitute relief for conflict concealed within, the child cannot control it–cannot cure himself. To ask him to do so is just as foolish as to ask a patient to control the symptom of his disease while doing nothing to cure the disease itself. Always what is necessary is to find out the root of the trouble. This must be done before a cure is attempted. We are so frightened of facing the real issues; but do you not see how it is only by sublimation of what are faults in the child, by using what is there that the faults get changed into virtues, an ugly trait into a beautiful character, and the child gets freed.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUDING REMARKS

ENOUGH has now been said. I have been dealing with the faults of the naughty child in sections; with boastfulness, with sulkiness, with destructiveness, with curiosity, with thieving and with lying, one after the other. We have, I trust, learnt many new things which will fit us more competently to guide our children, so that we may help and not hinder them too much in the difficult task of growing up.

Now, in conclusion and to clear our minds, I think we may summarise certain important principles which have constantly been operative, guiding my treatment of the various and difficult problems we have had to consider.

Always I have tried to find a reason Why? To discover what is causing the child to act in the way it does. I have refused to regard any childish naughtiness as being possible to cure by scoldings, by punishments, or indeed by any kind of direct attack.

The fault which distresses the parents must be regarded as the sign of a hidden conflict that distresses the child. It is this conflict then that must be discovered and dealt with. Never in any case can the lazy adult view be accepted that the child does wrong because of original sin.

The child does wrong because he suffers, usually through the blunders of those who are supposed to train him; his faults in behaviour are a relief for pain he finds too intolerable to bear. If a child is happy, in harmony with his world, loved and loving, then the child is good.

The influences that unconsciously affect children are everything. Their eyes and ears are ever open: they are eager for favours, for love, for praise, for someone or something to gratify their desires. They must find this to heal their feeling of being little and weak, the havoc-working sense of inferiority, for thus only can they gain the courage to go on step by step upwards on the path of life.

And another truth follows from this. The spontaneous reception given to the general actions of children is far more important than what is said to them about any particular fault. The continuously acting emotional effects, the fundamental moods of the nursery and schoolroom years, the first experiences in the home, never are these effaced from the later character. It is the things that you do every day unconsciously; the thoughts that you have and the things you feel; or all that perhaps you are trying to hide from your children, and also covering away from yourself, that are the real directing forces in their characters.

Thus, this duty appears for all parents, and may not be neglected. *To train our children we have unceasingly to train ourselves.*

Moral conduct is never easy. We all want what we do want. We surrender our wishes only because we find that we satisfy other desires by so doing. We are praised

and rewarded for preferring to give up to others what we want ourselves. And a practical lesson in our training of children depends upon this. The parents must take the greatest possible care that bad conduct does not give children greater pleasure than good conduct. If children are left unnoticed when good they quickly feel neglected, and if allowed to enjoy power when they are naughty, through the sorrow of the parents and the upsetting of the nursery regime, they will continue to be naughty whenever they are bored or for any reason crave some emotional relief.

I want to go one step further. I have, I think, made it sufficiently clear that behind all symptoms of character-deformation in children lie deep ills, which perhaps may be defined as feelings of unexplained excitability. We found, too, that the troubles arise out of groups of emotions, connected with the family relationships–the mother and son, the father and daughter, the brothers and sisters. Now, these emotions are, I hold, essentially sexual. The child is born with instincts and desires, which give rise almost at once to love, to hatred, and to jealousy.

Most parents, I am well aware, will indignantly deny this. Some will treat the suggestion as ridiculous. They will regard it as the result of a mania, of a fixed idea, of a determination to explain everything by one explanation. I can to a certain extent reassure them. I am stretching the word sexual to include the very germs that afterwards blossom into the sexual life. 1 should say that the little girl with her doll is showing maternal instincts, that the boy with his trumpet and tin sword is showing the crudest manifestation of the male protective instinct. Am I not also entitled to say that the

child's rebellion against the rule of the father, its nestling in the mother's arms, its rivalry and quarrels for mastery with its brothers and sisters, show the instincts of love, of hate, and of jealousy?

Never to be effaced are the effects of these early emotional relationships. If we realise this fully and practically, it must mean much greater watchfulness over our children, in particular over the expression of our love for them and the love we claim from them. For these first expressions are the prelude of the book of love that is to follow. They influence all of the child's later love experiences; they determine the happiness and the unhappiness of his (or, of course, her) adult life.

This is no fanciful statement. And because it is true the responsibility of parents is very great. The purpose of this little book will be fulfilled if it clears the way and gives some practical knowledge, because if parents understand better they will have more sympathy with childish wrong-doers.

Many of the suggestions made are, I know, new to many parents and will by no means be pleasing to them. Also I am fully aware of the inadequacy of my statement of the facts. I have purposely made everything as simple as I could. This may lead to mistakes. Yet I hope I have sufficiently emphasised that the task of helping any child can never be easy for any parent. For most of us it is a series of blunders, which we fail to see only if our eyes have lost their vision of truth.

I do, however, venture to believe that I have set forth some truths–placed the nursery in a fresh and brighter light, which may give help to many anxious parents; and further, I have started some lines of investigation which will enable some parents to detect

and rectify the first signs of error in their children, while there are others, I hope, who may be led by the suggestions I have opened out, to study more deeply the causes and perplexities that determine the roots of character.

This is certain–only by accepting what is true can we advance. By this honesty only can we give aid to the children, who with a burden of ancient instincts and uncontrolled impulses, come into a world filled with undesirable examples and manifold temptations.

One final word of advice.

No parent can hope to accomplish too much. Children have got to be naughty. We do not expect the child to read until it has learnt its letters or to calculate and work sums before it understands the use of figures; we do not expect it to walk until it has stumbled and fallen many times, or to use its tiny hands with precision until it has broken many objects. Why then should we expect it to be good without learning to be good?

Parents by constantly requiring from the child standards of conduct right for the adult, do, in ways I have tried to make plain, produce a strain which, not only hurts, discourages and irritates the child, but may turn the creative force of the young life back upon itself.

It is ever thus in life; when we draw back in fear, too hastily or too much coerced from any expression of a spontaneous act, the energy gathered for action flows back impotent. I believe that many a creative artist, as well as uncounted happy and productive lives, are destroyed in this muddled and unintelligent training, whereby we attempt to turn the child into the good boy or girl.

What parents can do is to clear up difficulties as these appear, and to remove obstacles in the way of the child's growth. Also they can place within the child's reach the materials and the means by which it can most readily liberate its primitive instincts by giving them a right expression.

> *In fact the real work of the parent may be likened to that of the scene-shifter and property manager.*

One certain rule may be given. Children must not be subjected, in any circumstances, to conditions of emotional stress, which increase immensely their inevitable conflicts and their feelings of inferiority in an adult world. If the parents do not find out these feelings (which they ought to know are always present whenever a child is naughty), let me warn them–and this is the last word I have to say–that they are dangerously limiting their children's chances of a successful and happy life.

The fate of every child is decided in the nursery; criminals are made there as well as saints and heroes.

"The End."